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## GOLF BAG WITH ACCESS PORT FOR FACILITATING REPAIRS

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to golf equipment and, in particular, to a golf bag with an access port for facilitating repairs.

U.S. Patent No. 6,415,919 to Gary E. Keller discloses a golf bag having a body with an open top end defined by a throat structure and a closed bottom end defined by a bottom assembly. An elongated stay or strut is located inside the body. An upper end of the stay extends into the throat structure and is held therein by a retainer clip. A lower end of the stay is received in a pocket formed between the bottom assembly and the body. The stay extends through a sleeve which is sewn inside the body. Once the golf bag is assembled, the stay may be removed and replaced by removing the retainer clip but the pocket and the sleeve are not accessible without disassembling the golf bag.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a golf bag including a body defining a generally tubular compartment for containing golf clubs. The compartment has an open top end and a closed bottom end. A throat structure defines the open top end of the compartment, and a bottom assembly defines the closed bottom end of the compartment. An elongated stay is located in a

longitudinal position inside the body. The stay has an upper end engaged with the throat structure and a lower end disposed in a pocket formed between the bottom assembly and the body. An openable and closable access port is located in the body between the throat structure and the bottom assembly for providing access through the body to the compartment, the stay and the pocket. The access port may comprise a zipper closure that extends longitudinally in the body. The access port is opened by opening the zipper closure and closed by closing the zipper closure. The golf bag may include a sleeve inside the body through which the stay extends, and the access port will also provide access to the sleeve.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a golf bag incorporating the present invention;

Fig. 2 is an enlarged partial sectional view taken along the line 2-2 in Fig.1;

Fig. 3 is an enlarged sectional view showing portions of the golf bag and a retainer clip removed therefrom;

Fig. 4 is a plan view of a portion of the golf bag; and

Fig. 5 is a front elevational view of the retainer clip shown in Fig. 3.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

Referring to the drawings, Fig. 1 shows a golf bag which includes the present invention and is indicated generally by the reference numeral 10. The golf bag 10 includes a bottom assembly 12, such as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. D372,362 to L. J. Bryant et al, which is typically a cup-shaped structure formed of a suitable synthetic resin, and a body 14 preferably

formed of a suitable fabric. The body 14 defines a generally tubular compartment 15 for containing golf clubs, and the bottom assembly 12 defines a closed bottom end of the compartment 15. The body 14 has a longitudinal spine 16 at one side thereof, and an open top end of the compartment 15 is defined by a throat structure 18 such as disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,596,328 to J. A. Solheim. The spine 16 extends between the open top end and the closed bottom end of the compartment 15. The golf bag 10 also includes a shoulder strap 20, a handle 21, and storage pockets 22 and 24.

As seen best in Figs. 3 and 4, the throat structure 18 has an opening 26 defined by an outer wall 28, an inner wall 30 and a spaced apart pair of side walls 32 and 34. The opening 26 extends longitudinally through the throat structure 18 so as to extend upwardly through a top surface 36 thereof and downwardly into the tubular body 14. A ledge 38 extends from the outer wall 28 into the opening 26 to divide the opening 26 into an open portion 40 and a laterally disposed offset portion 42 which lies below the ledge 38. The ledge 38 closes the upper end of the offset portion 42 of the opening 26 and is located a short distance below the top surface 36 of the throat structure 18 to provide a recessed seat 44 at the top end of the opening 26. As seen best in Fig. 4, the throat structure 18 is also provided with a pair of grooves 46 and 48 each formed in a different one of the opposed pair of side walls 32 and 34 with these grooves 46, 48 being disposed to face inwardly into the opening 26. The grooves 46 and 48 extend downwardly from the recessed seat 44 to the bottom end of the opening 26.

As seen in Fig. 2, an elongated stay or strut 50 is located in a longitudinal position inside the body 14 substantially parallel to the spine 16 with a lower end 52 of the stay 50 received in a pocket 54 which is formed between the bottom assembly 12 and the body 14. An upper end 58

of the stay 50 extends into the opening 26 in the throat structure 18. Alternatively, the pocket 54 could be of any suitable configuration such as a socket (not shown) molded in the bottom assembly 12. U.S. Patent No. 4,834,235 to J. A. Solheim et al discloses a golf bag with a rigidifying strut that is similar to the stay 50. The stay 50 is preferably of generally rectangular cross-section and is preferably formed of fiberglass. It will be appreciated that other materials such as graphite may be used to make the stay 50 so long as the selected material is relatively flexible and is strong enough to withstand the normal wear and tear to which golf bags are subjected.

The stay 50 extends upwardly from the pocket 54 and passes through a fabric sleeve 56 which is sewn inside the body 14. The upper end 58 of the stay 50 is disposed within the laterally offset portion 42 of the opening 26 in abutting engagement with the ledge 38 which prevents longitudinal movement of the stay 50. Lateral movement of the stay upper end 58 from the offset portion 42 into the open portion 40 of the opening 26 is prevented when a retainer clip 60 is removably mounted in the opening 26.

The retainer clip 60, as seen best in Figs 3 and 5, includes an upper pedestal 62 of generally rectangular configuration which is shaped to fit in the recessed seat 44 with the pedestal 62 in seated engagement with the ledge 38 when the retainer clip 60 is positioned within the opening 26. A fixed leg 64 and a spring leg 66 depend in spaced apart relationship from the pedestal 62. The fixed leg 64 has opposite side edges 68 and 70 slidably disposed within the grooves 46 and 48 formed in the throat structure 18. The spring leg 66 of the retainer clip 60 has a narrower width dimension than the fixed leg 64 so that it will be disposed in a space between the side walls 32 and 34 in which the grooves 46 and 48 are formed and will be free to move in

that space. The spring leg 66 of the retainer clip 60 will be in a relaxed state so that it will depend from the pedestal 62 at a diverging angle with respect to the fixed leg 64 when the retainer clip 60 is removed from the opening 26 as shown in Fig. 3. The spring leg 66 is moved to an inwardly deflected position by a cam member 72 formed at the depending end of the spring leg 66 which moves into bearing engagement with the inner wall 30 of the throat structure 18 when the retainer clip 60 is pushed downwardly into the opening 26. When the retainer clip 60 reaches a fully inserted position as shown in Fig. 2, the cam member 72 is engaged in a notch or slot 74 formed at the lower end of the inner wall 30 as a result of the spring action of the leg 66. When the cam member 72 moves into the slot 74, it will latch the retainer clip 60 in a latched position within the opening 26 of the throat structure 18.

The opening 26 in the throat structure 18, the sleeve 56 and the pocket 54 are in longitudinal alignment with each other and are preferably disposed proximate the spine 16 of the body 14. Therefore, with the retainer clip 60 removed from the opening 26, insertion of the stay 50 is accomplished by sliding it downwardly through the open portion 40 of the opening 26 and through the sleeve 56 so that the lower end 52 of the stay 50 enters the pocket 54. The upper end 58 of the stay 50 is moved manually from the open portion 40 of the opening 26 into the offset portion 42 thereof prior to insertion of the retainer clip 60. Subsequent insertion of the retainer clip 60 into the opening 26, as described above, will position the fixed leg 64 in engagement with the upper end 58 of the stay 50 and retain the upper end 58 of the stay 50 in the offset portion 42 of the opening 26.

Should it be necessary or desirable to remove the stay 50, the cam member 72, which protrudes through the slot 74 when the retainer clip 60 is in the latched position, may be pushed

toward the outer wall 28 of the opening 26 by hand or by using a suitable tool (not shown) such as a golf tee. This will unlatch the retainer clip 60 for removal from the opening 26. The upper end 58 of the stay 50 may then be moved manually from the offset portion 42 into the open portion 40 of the opening 26 and is thus released for upward movement to remove it.

According to the present invention, a zipper closure 80 is located in the body 14 extending longitudinally thereof adjacent the pocket 22 as shown in Fig. 1. The zipper closure 80 forms an openable and closable access port 82 located in the body 14 between the throat structure 18 and the bottom assembly 12. The access port 82 is opened by opening the zipper closure 80, and the access port 82 is closed by closing the zipper closure 80. When the access port 82 is opened, it provides access to the compartment 15, the stay 50, the pocket 54 and the sleeve 56 in order to facilitate repairs. The access port 82 may also be used in retrieving small articles that inadvertently fall into the compartment 15 through the throat structure 18.

The access port 82 is also useful while the golf bag 10 is being manufactured. During assembly of the golf bag 10, the body 14 is sewn with the pockets 22, 24 on the inside and then the body 14 is turned inside-out through the access port 82. This positions the pockets 22, 24 on the outside of the body 14. Finally, the zipper closure 80 is closed thereby closing the access port 82. In prior golf bag manufacturing, the zipper closure 80 was replaced by an open slot that was permanently sewn shut once the body was turned inside-out.